

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

JUNE 1973

6p

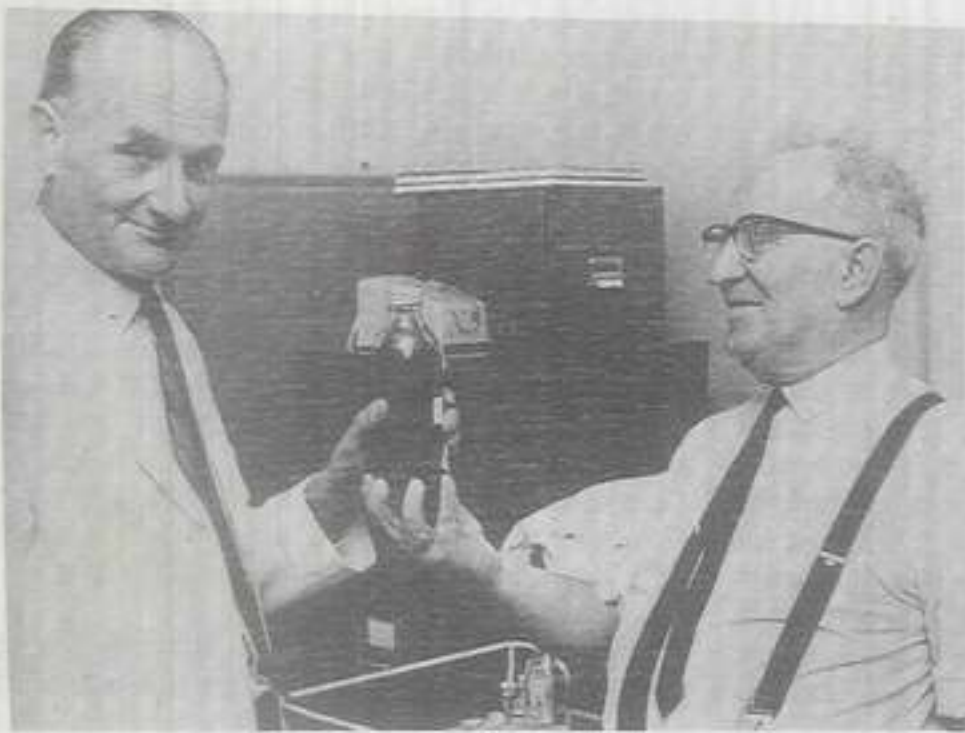
Vol. 2 No.6

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' James Connolly



## A BLOODY FRAUD

## The Presidential Election



ECHOES FROM

— THE —

# BOTTOM DOG

"We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the "Bottom Dog"—the oppressed—be it nation, class, or sex."

Vol. 1. No. 5

17th Novemer 1917

## A SCRAP OF PAPER

Clunes, the tobacco people, have in their employ a manager named Hurley, who hails from Newcastle West, and has anchored himself snugly in Ascot Terrace by virtue of a matrimonial alliance much to his liking financially and otherwise. We know him to be an energetic individual utilising his holidays in canvassing for Clunes. But in his latest exploit he may have over-reached himself. He told the senior female hands, of whom there are some sixteen, that they would be dismissed if they joined the Transport Union, and he and McCoy, the foreman, induced some of them after a ten minutes exportation with each to sign a pencilled undertaking not to join the Union. In this age of scraps of paper, Hurley and his friend must know that this undertaking, procured under compulsion and threat, is not binding. Hurley had better beware or the B.D. will bite. The girls receive truly magnificent wages ranging from 6/- upwards. Some signed the scrap of paper; they got 6d. and a 1/- in different cases. Some increase this!

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Vol. 1 No. 6

24th November, 1917

## THE EXPLOITS OF EAKINS

The ways of the average employer are many. He is an astute gentleman at all times, but especially so when there is a danger of his pocket suffering. Of course he doesn't like that his employees should look for an increase in their wages, and neither does he like to see them organise for their own protection and defence, although he joins with his fellow employers in wealthy Federations in order to safeguard himself and his pocket, and try to break up Trades Unionism on the part of his workers. We have heard that since the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union started organising in Limerick, certain employers are thinking of ways and means to smash the Union. We will give one instance which has come to the B.D.'s ears Twelve girls employed by George McKern and Sons., Ltd., Printers & Co., joined the Union and at their request a demand was put in for a 5/- increase in their wages, which ranged from 5/- to 11/- for an employee thirteen years with the firm. The Manager, an individual with the very Irish name of Eakins, told the girls that he would give them 2/6 increase each, on condition that they left the Union, and he would also pay them a sum equal to the amount they paid into the Union; that if they did not leave the Union they would not get an increase, and furthermore he would dismiss them. Under pressure eleven of the girls agreed and got the 2/6 increase. One young girl named Sarah McGowan, to her everlasting credit be it said — refused to leave

the Transport Union and was therefore dismissed by Eakins. The girls who accepted the bribe to leave the Union are, perhaps, more to be pitied than blamed. They may think that they did the wise thing, but the paltry pieces of copper which they sold themselves for and turned their back on the victimised, self-respected comrades, can be taken off in the morning by Eakins, as the girls have no Union now behind them to fight their cause ...

Vol. 1 No. 7

1st December, 1917

## THE WORKER

I have broken my hands on your granite  
I have broken my strength on your steel,  
I have sweated through years for your pleasure,  
I have worked like a slave for your weal.  
And what is the wage you have paid me,  
You masters and drivers of men?  
Enough so I come in my hunger  
To beg for more labour again.  
I have given my manhood to serve you,  
I have given my gladness and youth.  
You have used me and spent me and crushed me  
And thrown me aside without ruth;  
You have shut my eyes off from the sunlight,  
My lungs from the untainted air;  
You have housed me in horrible places,  
Surrounded by squalor and care,  
I have built you the world in its beauty,  
I have brought you the glory and spoil;  
You have blighted my sons and my daughters,  
You have scourged me again to my toil;  
Yet I suffer all in my patience,  
For somehow I dimly have known,  
That some day, the Worker will conquer,  
In a world that was meant for his own.

Benton Braley.

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Vol. 1 No. 8

8th December 1917

Barrett and Casey, the Chicken Chokers of Roche's Street, are forming a combine (The Duck Egg Combine) and true to the trust spirit are monarchs of all they survey in the Limerick Markets on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Like the wolf on the fold, down they swoop and woe betide the poor timid townswoman who dares approach within a Minorca Cock's doodle of a country counsins' basket to wrest a few eggs for their octopian clutches. It goes without saying Casey is cock of the walk! And what of the two valiant shirkers of constables (sons of the Empire) who on last market day sat unmoved, willingly stuffing themselves with sampled apples whilst this rapacious combine were "gathering their shells by the score"? B. and C. beware of the B.D. Don't try to pack all your eggs into two baskets. Remember, there are others. The respectable poor have respectable meat denied them. We must insist that they must and will have eggs at a reasonable price, not 3d each ...

RED

08927

LETTER

DAY

It was like a line for a grade "B" Western: "So come Hell or High Water we'll be there." With that stout promise, members of Limerick's discreet Ignation Community, decided to meet in the Loyola Hall, Crescent Basement, to make renewals of dedication.

Ostensibly, one of the purposes of the Community has been to provide for the poorer classes in the city. It has in its affluent ranks people of influence in Limerick whose reasons for membership could be open to question. Are they spurred on by a burning spiritual desire to help the needy, or is there a more simple earthly reason for the existence of the Community?

Judging by the May Newsletter of the Ignation Community, the gathering of the philanthropically-minded solicitors, doctors, businessmen etc., in the Loyola Hall had special significance. We are told that May is Mary's Month . . . and Mary is a special patron of the Community . . . God between us and all harm.

The following is an extract from the Letter: Red Letter Day: The 16th of May—Renewal Day—could be a truly memorable day. It could mean: "I am settling for a definite starting point on the road to Heaven. I'm digging in here. No retreat from here. Advance?"

The only advance the wealthy members of the Ignation Community will make will be in the line of profits by their continuing exploitation of the very poor and needy who supposedly benefit from the "generosity" of the Ignations.

A quick glance through their Letter will reveal the following names: Ray Joyce, (sympathy on a death), Joe McGuire (congratulations on promotion), Sen. Ted Russell (congratulations on election) and a John Hegarty who was reported to be the star of a social organised by the Ladies Sodality. What would Mary say?

So now for the current section: the Letter, which is sent to all members, tells us that four Jesuits died during the month of April.

Wishful thinking section: The Ignation Community has its eyes of China . . . no less . . . and, with its typical Catholic smugness decides what is the best for that country: ". . . And I offer them that all parts of the Church may work for the good of the whole Church and for the spread of Christian values among the Chinese."

The above quote, taken directly from the Letter, and gives an insight to the closed minds of the Ignations. If they and their camp-followers are bastions of Christian values, then there is obviously much converting to be done in Limerick before anyone can go gallivanting among the Chinese spreading "Christian values".

# a bloody fraud

A blood-donor from the city of Limerick,  
Gave 116 pints of blood red and thick;  
But for all his hard work,  
All he got was a cork,  
Oh, what a lousy, bloody trick!

World champions are a rare breed. For a small provincial city to throw up one such super-star in a lifetime is a notable achievement. Over half a century has passed since Limerick could lay claim to its last world-beater ... to the days when Paddy Ryan, of Pallasgreen, threw the Olympic hammer farther than anyone else then living. But how many people in Limerick are aware that to-day in their very midst dwells a real, live, undefeated world champion, with his record-shattering performance still intact?

The untold story of this human chapter has been relegated to a lost limbo in Limerick's long and chequered history. The Guinness Book of Records has also left the feat unrecorded. As our local champion walks briskly to and from his daily work, no admiring crowds impede his journeys; his autograph is never sought and no gold medal has been cast to mark his epoch-making achievement. Like the prophet of old, this modern hero remains unhonoured and unnoticed in his native city.

And the name of the forgotten champion? None other than the original "Parish" man, Willie "Whack" Gleeson. And the world record? A check of unimpeachable sources clearly showed that Whack topped the poll as the world's leading voluntary blood-donor. With a total of 116 pints logged up, he easily outpinted his nearest rivals in the next three countries, viz.,

	Pints
Ireland(Limerick)	116
Australia	103
Great Britain	84
America	76

In terms of blood and money the Limerick Blood Transfusion Service is to-day one of the city's thriving industries. And no person could claim to have contributed more to its success than Whack Gleeson. Twenty years ago the local blood bank would have been hard pressed to find half-a-dozen pints of blood. Then Whack took a hand. Through his determined efforts, coupled with his one-man press publicity campaign hundreds, and later, thousands of people enrolled as donors. Soon gallons of life's elixir began to flow into the near-dry bank, and Limerick became the envy of the country's other transfusion centres.

In pursuit of his campaign to make the people of Limerick more blood conscious, it was no unusual sight to see Whack complete with brush and paste-pot, moving about the city, at all hours of the night, sticking up posters announcing the next "bleed". And whenever an emergency arose, W.W., was always on tap to donate a pint of blood, or to insert an S.O.S. at a moment's notice, in the newspaper on which he worked. And so his work went on, and on ...

In 1968, when Whack had donated his 100th pint, the Confraternity poet, Daniel J. Macaulay, was stirred to pay "A Tribute To Willie":

\* \* \* \* \*

One hundred pints of Willie's blood  
Does that sound so anaemic?  
Give him the grand award I would  
That's known as academic

His letters and his poems appear  
When Limerick is - requiring  
For Blood Transfusion Service here  
His blood for one - expiring?

Many's the postponed epitaph  
Because of Willie "Whack"  
Many people live and laugh  
Whom he from death held back.

Twelve gallons and a half of blood  
This gentleman donated  
A very veritable flood,  
Not To Be Under-rated.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the autumn of 1968, on the occasion of his 100th donation, and "in deep appreciation of his sterling and unselfish devotion as donor and P.R.O. to the local blood bank, the cause of suffering humanity", Whack was prevailed on to agree to accept a gold medal, specially and suitably engraved to mark the historic event.

On October 1st, the great day arrived. A quiet, little party was arranged to celebrate the unique blood-letting. Though no "ladies man" or taproom toper, Whack rose to the occasion with impeccable style and taste. He reached St. John's Hospital laden with eight boxes of chocolates and a bottle of Five Star Jameson whiskey. The chocolates were duly distributed to the eight donor attendants (nurses) on duty and the whiskey went to Dr. Daniel Kelliher, medical director of the Limerick Blood Transfusion Service.

Whack took his place on the bed and soon the blood was flowing freely. A press reporter and photographer arrived to capture the scene for posterity. As the warm blood spurted into the bottle Whack, pleasantly pampered by the bevy of attendants, gently relaxed and waited for his gold medal. The pint was quickly filled, and all was set for the final gold touch.

Dr. Kelliher moved over to the bed and began to congratulate Whack on being the first centenarian, in the sphere of blood donation. The smiling doctor leaned forward and firmly pressed a whiskey cork in the palm of Whack's hand.

At this stage, the blood - or what remained of it - of the shaken Whack began to boil, as he tried hard to keep his cool. He managed to go through the motions, "for the record", of accepting the "medal" through the medium of the cork (as shown in picture). A former donor attendant, now retired later said: "It's possible that the cork he received was the one sealing the bottle of Jameson whiskey which he gave to Dr. Kelliher".

ALL THAT GLISTERS IS NOT GOLD!



Every picture tells a story ... or does it? The above picture, published in the CORK EXAMINER, shows Willie "Whack" Gleeson being presented with a "gold medal" by Dr. Daniel Kelliher, Medical Director of Limerick Blood Transfusion Service, at St. John's Hospital, October 1st, 1968, to mark his 100th donation as a voluntary blood donor. The "medal" turned out to be the cork of a whiskey bottle.

Whack learned that there was no blood-bought medal ... "it wasn't ready". Despite this upset, he continued to give blood four times yearly in the years that followed. He also kept up his work as unpaid billposter, press correspondent, canvasser etc. After a series of unsuccessful visits to the blood bank in the period 1971 - 72, his services as a blood donor were no longer required, as, on each visit, he was politely told: "No more blood, Willie, until you get the medal (any day now), then we'll make a big thing out of it."

And so, after over 31 years service, the career of Limerick's only living champion came to a bloody-minded end. All connection with the local Transfusion Service having been severed, Whack temporarily retired to grassy Ardnacrusha. But, apart from the missing medal, other questions about the blood and the blood-money of the Limerick Transfusion Service remain unanswered.

Apart from the fact that Dr. Kelliher supervises the supply, testing and distribution of the blood, and the payment of the donor attendants, little else is publicly known about the work of the Limerick Service. The financial operations of the blood-bank remain a mystery. The amount of money raised from blood sold, at the rate of four or five guineas a pint to private patients and public health authorities is not available. It is time the financial structure of the Limerick Service was made known to the hundreds of regular, voluntary blood-donors and the public in general.

# THE FERENKA STRIKE

A CASE HISTORY

"I am convinced that a few trouble-makers got in — people who are anti-establishment — call them what you like — Maoists, Communists or something else — they are just anti-society — the rotten apple with the good. The big question is why the ordinary workers can be taken in by them. It could be intimidation".

Thus in an "exclusive Limerick Weekly Echo interview (May 12th) The reason for the cause of the recent strike was given by J.M.H. Jacob, managing director of the firm. The Ferenka factory is part of the A.K.Z.O. organisation, the giant multi-national company.

The strike began at 12.00 noon on Monday, 7th May, when workers on the A. shift, walked out of the factory in protest against the appointment of two foremen who were recruited from outside the plant. Pickets were placed and all 750 production workers on the three other shifts stopped work. The maintenance fitters and electricians passed the pickets and continued to do their normal work. All the production workers are members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union through a closed shop agreement between the union and the company, entered into before the plant commenced production.

On Tuesday morning, 8th May a meeting of management, including engineers, supervisors, foremen and instructors was held. The confusion about the starting time of this meeting is indicative of the communication difficulties which have effected the management of the factory since it began production. Jacob, the managing director, called the meeting for 10.15 a.m. and simultaneously John Hayden, management consultant, issued instructions that the meeting was timed for 10.45 a.m.

During the meeting, Jacob attempted to outline the events leading up to the strike. It soon became obvious to many of his listeners that he did not seem to know what had gone wrong. Two representatives of "top" management, Dr. J.P. Munting and Evers, then spoke. Both contributions contained elements of fact, but the conflicting divisions existing among the leading members of management, regarding the underlying reasons for the strike were clearly evident. The feeling intensified among supervisors and foremen that the "top" management was not tuned in to the overall situation. Foremen are not encouraged to speak at these meetings and usually feel over-awed by the presence of their bosses. Leaving the meeting one foreman summed up the situation and his own feelings when he muttered in an aside to a colleague, "You wouldn't know what they wanted you to say, would you?".

On the same day (Tuesday), Jacob sent a letter to all Ferenka workers in which he stated:

*The reason given for the work stoppage was that it was a protest against the appointment of 2 Foremen from outside the Plant and that this action by Management was denying promotion opportunities to men already working within the Plant. Such a statement is entirely without justification. The present series of appointments are for some 35 Foremen/Instructors, of whom 31 have been made. 29 of this 31 were from within, and 3 from outside. As you will see from the above mentioned figures, it is the Company's policy to promote from within. However, the Company must recruit externally, where strengthening the*

*Company's labour and Management ability is required.*

The strike continued with four different groups of militant workers maintaining a round-the-clock picket line.

On Tuesday a meeting of the Workers' Council (factory shop-stewards) took place. On Wednesday, 9th May, the Limerick Leader carried the following report:

*Mr. Nicholas McGrath, Chairman of the I.T.G.W.U. workers at Ferenka, said to-day that the Management had been made aware of the feelings of the workers in advance concerning the appointment of the supervisors who had not been employed with the company prior to their employment. He said that on Tuesday the Workers Council (Shop stewards) asked Management for a further meeting to discuss the situation but, he said, the management had refused to meet them until work is resumed. "Management continue to hold that view", he said ... The shop stewards have asked that a Rights Commissioner investigate the position and that pending this the two men employed hold no foreman status.*

On the following day (Thursday), the second meeting of the Ferenka management took place at 10.30 a.m. Jacob started off in the same manner as the first meeting by briefing his listeners on the situation as he saw it. He then invited discussion from the floor. Shift supervisor, Christy Rodgers, overcame his inhibitions and put forward his views on the dispute. He said the shift supervisors were on the factory floor for all the four shifts (round the clock) or a total of 160 hours per week, whereas the senior management people were only on the job during the day and for only about 40 day hours per week. He stated that the shift supervisors were being forced into the position of having to interpret the Works Rules and cope with problems on the floor, and that most of this work should be done by the personnel office. He complained that decisions were being taken and changed at the top without consultation with the supervisors and that no feed-back was coming through from the personnel office. He concluded by saying that it seemed as if the senior management lacked confidence in the ability of the supervisors and foremen to do the job.

After this, some more people, mainly from the superintendent level, gave their views. Jacob adjourned the meeting at about 12.30 p.m. without any further conclusions being reached.

On the same evening (Thursday), the Irish Transport and General Workers Union official dealing with the Ferenka workers, Vincent Moran, raised the matter of the strike at the monthly meeting of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions. In the course of a statement, he explained the attitude of the union (Limerick Leader report, 12th May):

*We had to concede that we had no say as to who should be employed in a certain capacity ... The company, said that it was up to management to decide who should be employed as a foreman, and we had to admit that it was not our function. We have advised the workers to resume work and we would process this through the rights commissioners, but they thought it could be solved by staying out. We are in a position to know that it will not be solved like that, and the company is prepared to contest this issue even to the point of a prolonged dispute. A total of £20,000 has been lost*

*in wages. We are no nearer to the end of the dispute than we were last Monday. We could call on them to resume work and allow us to go on with the job ... I am in a position to know of the hardship that is going to ensue for the employees plus their dependants. I would earnestly appeal to the council to exhort them to go back to work.*

Many members of the Trades Council believed it would serve no useful purpose for the Council to merely call on the striking workers to return to work. "The Council, after debating the issue, decided that they would be available at a minute's notice to help out in the dispute by meeting the management or anybody else". (Limerick Leader report).

The Limerick Leader article contained a statement delivered to its office on Thursday evening by Nicholas McGrath, on behalf of the strikers:

*The unofficial dispute is still unanimously decided by the men. Prior to any resumption that may occur, the work council have been directed by the men to seek a meeting with the managing director of Ferenka Ltd ... in view of recent actions and statements by the personnel department of Ferenka Ltd, they no longer hold the respect of the men.*

The statement concluded by asking the rights commissioner to immediately meet the works council, trade unions and management on the issue and "other major issues which are pending with management for a considerable time". This was the first public reference by the strikers to the unspecified "other major issues".

On Friday morning (May 11th) at 10.30 a.m. Jacob held another management meeting and repeated his "sit tight" line. Supervisor, Clem McCluskey, asked if it was wise to use such terms as "Maoists", "Communists" and "Marxists" in describing the leaders of the strike. (The county edition of the Limerick Weekly Echo had been published the previous (Thursday) evening, containing Jacob's attack on the "Maoists" and "Communists"). Jacob replied that these words had been taken out of context. He said he had not used these words. He stated that the journalist who had interviewed him had asked him if one would describe the "trouble-makers" as Maoists and Communists, and he (Jacob) had answered: "Call them what you like".

Jacob said it was wrong that these words had been used, and added that "you can expect this treatment from the press". It had since been pointed out to him that the word "Communist" had a different meaning in Ireland than in Holland and on the Continent. More discussion followed on what the firm's best tactics should be to defeat the striking workers. A legal injunction against named picketers was considered, but was turned down on the grounds that it would not be a wise or effective move and also because of the difficulty involved in

getting an accurate list of the names of the workers on picket duty. Representatives of the personnel office said they were very active behind the scenes in trying to bring the strike to an end. Contact had been established and undercover meetings arranged with powerful and influential people in Limerick. All avenues were being explored with a view to bringing pressure to bear on the workers. It was mentioned that various bodies had been lined up and were ready to move in when requested, and that the Junior Chamber of Commerce had been very active in this work. The personnel office spokesmen made it obvious that they fully supported the Jacob's line of "sitting tight".

Jacob gave a detailed chronological history of the background to the strike. Once again a big credibility gap developed in the minds of most of the listening supervisors especially regarding the appointment of the two new foremen. Jacob said he had shown a copy of this report to an un-named "independent person" and this person had stated that confusion had been caused in the workers' minds, due to the lack of communication between management and workers. When Jacob finished, Sean Hennessy, superintendent over supervisors, said he thought all the trouble resulted from a conflict between the union and the workers. He stated that there was no real disagreement between the company and the workers, and that fundamentally, it was a power struggle between the workers and the union. This was a common enough occurrence with the I.T.G.W.U., he concluded.

Jacob intervened to say he largely agreed with Hennessy and that the company had been thinking along these lines. All the members of senior management fell into line with the new analysis. An explanation had been found and the meeting ended on this self-satisfied note.

On the same day (Friday), Jacob followed up his press interview by sending a second letter to all the Ferenka workers. He wrote:

*To date the Ferenka image is not good. Our recurring unofficial work stoppages have rapidly decreased the trust placed in us by our customers, and in the long term, will damage the future of this Company and the security of employment that it wishes to offer. If the strike continues much longer, a phased to return to work may be necessary because of the involved nature of the production process. This means that a full resumption of work for all employees may not be possible, immediately the work stoppage ends.*

Up to this point the resolve of the strike leaders and activists remained as strong as ever. Pickets were still being maintained around the clock, and a big number of the workers were determined not to return to work until their grievances had been resolved.

But the toll of the strike's pressures then began to tell. The campaign of the press propaganda by the company, the implacable attitude of the union, the refusal of the Rights Commissioner to intervene without a return to work, the continued passing of the pickets by electricians and fitters and the final threat to close the factory, all combined to break down the striking workers' solid front.

On Saturday, 12th May, few workers reported for picket duty. In the afternoon the workers' chairman, Nicholas McGrath, had a three-hour discussion with Dr. Munting and, shortly afterwards the news was out that the strike had been called off.

Monday, 14th May saw a full resumption of work by the four shifts with none of the workers' grievances resolved. The strike had failed in its purpose.

Most of the workers returned to work with feelings of frustration and anger against their leaders and union. Efforts by union official, Vincent Moran, to dispel these feelings have been unsuccessful (of the four separate meetings of shift workers at the factory, two broke up in disorder).

On Friday, 18th May, at 11 a.m. Jacob called a management meeting to examine the lessons of the strike from the company viewpoint. He said the case for management to be more aware was clear and they all needed a little bit more education. A new expert in management training was being brought in for this purpose. Members of the personnel department stated that a list of "trouble-makers" had been drawn up. It was hoped to isolate these people in the near future, with the object of weeding them out of the company. Before the meeting ended, Jacob said it was planned to phase-out all the foreign management at the factory over the next fifteen years.

The strike also has its lessons for the workers. It was generally known by workers, foremen and supervisors that a walk-out would result if the two new foremen were employed, but the workers failed to reach senior management with this message.

During the strike the workers and their union failed to publicly answer Jacob's allegations. One of the most obvious flaws in Jacob's arguments was his statement in his letter of 8th May when he justified the appointment of the two new foremen on the grounds that "the Company must recruit externally where strengthening the Company's labour and Management ability is required". The weakness of this case is shown by the fact that the two new foremen were appointed to the scrap department — a low-skill area of the factory. The two foremen had no knowledge of the work-flow, constructions, colour-coding, machine types or allocations. The work of the two new foremen could have been easily carried out by most of the approximately 80 applicants for the 31 foreman vacancies.

The lack of communication and co-operation between the maintenance tradesmen (fitters and electricians) and the general workers is a decisive factor in preventing the mergencies of a strong Workers' Council at the factory. It also enables the company to exploit this situation for its own advantage. The manner in which Jacob was able to participate in the public press smearing of the strikers without reply from the workers underlines this weakness. In view of the threat to "purge the troublemakers", the immediate need for workers' leadership is vital.

The Ferenka workers must not be deterred by threats to "close the factory". They must organise themselves into a strong, united force and extend the traditional concept of collective bargaining from the bottom upwards. They must consider effective ways of making new demands for industrial democracy in all spheres of industry — profits, training schemes, welfare, work organisation, etc. They must also demand that the company's books be opened to the Work's Council to ensure that workers are kept informed of all company developments. The introduction of real industrial democracy — this is the challenge facing Ferenka workers in the days ahead.



# EXILED MEMORY '57

Emigration . . . the second last step . . . driven out by hopeless unemployment . . . the shortage of self-respect . . . and money . . . a forced move before the dwindling life-lines ran out . . . a traumatic trip into a 'pagan' world . . . unreal family farewells . . . the uneasy train journey to Dublin . . . a painful pause at Amiens Street . . . the uninvited visit from the determined Legion of Mary girls seeking irrelevant details . . . a 'ast bitter look from Dun Laoghaire . . . the confusion and disillusionment of the boat . . . the long restless train haul from Holyhead . . . a bleak arrival at Euston at 6.45 a.m. . . . tired, dirty and nervous . . . the first startling sight of black workers . . . initial clumsiness in getting on and off the Underground escalators . . . the smell and noise of the station . . . emotional shock on seeing the sexy posters . . . the dizzy, unfamiliar names flashing past on the subway train . . . fighting down the almost overwhelming desire to catch the next train back home . . . the solitary search for a room and a job in bewildering places among self-assured people . . . relentless feelings of loneliness, insecurity and inadequacy crowding and clouding the mind . . . yearning for the stability of the familiar . . . cornered by the fear of the unknown . . . holding on . . . hoping for the best . . .



D 08927

## HI SILVER

With the high price of beef, Gardai are investigating the disappearance of the wandering horses from Corbally. Unconfirmed reports say that residents were seen lassoing the animals last night. "Corbally is the only place I know where they can afford beef", said a puzzled Garda. . . "but the question is. . . is it beef. . . ?"

In search of . . .

PART THREE

by Jim Kemmy

# John Francis O'Donnell

"And you've just come from Ireland; that's your plea  
For all those sickening substances of thought,  
Stepped in your brain, a jelly-fish at sea  
Or with the limpets blue in rock-craft caught".

(An Interview - J.F. O'Donnell)

## JOURNEYMAN JOURNALIST

When O'Donnell arrived in London his first job was as assistant to his old editor of the **TIPPERARY EXAMINER**, A.W. Hartnett, then editing the **UNIVERSAL NEWS**, a weekly organ of **IRISH** Catholic nationalist opinion. He was later promoted to the editorial chair. The **UNIVERSAL NEWS** was then in its infancy, but it died after a short life. Describing O'Donnell's progress in London, Michael MacDonagh, in **IRISH GRAVES IN ENGLAND**, wrote:

*In 1860 he was attracted to London - to London, with its great possibilities of glorious success, or - abject failure; to London, with its streets paved with gold, or formed of thorns and briars, of coals of fire, of trials and difficulties; to*

*London, where many an Irish journalist before him reached the highest heights of fame, and many others - too many, alas! - were plunged into the deepest depths of failure and poverty. It was a bold venture for a young man to whom the ways of great cities were strange and repellent. O'Donnell's success in London was but meagre. He had plenty of ability, and talent of a varied order, and astonishing quickness and readiness of composition; but he was lacking in some of the other qualities of a successful journalist - he wanted stability, fixity of purpose, application grit and willingness to drudge. Poor O'Donnell seems to have had many of the parts of Goldsmith. He could "write like an angel", and he knew not what it was to put money in his purse.*

In his poem **Happy Christmas**, O'Donnell

O'DONNELL'S GRAVE.



ponders on the loneliness of London life and on his feelings of homesickness on having to spend Christmas away from home.

*Down into London's struggling gloom,  
Down on the City of the Doom,  
A scarf of cloud around her bloom.*

*Upon the bridge I stood alone,  
Listening to the slow waves moan,  
Lapping the weedy buttress stone.*

*Friendless and homeless, 'twas to me  
A sort of Christmas company  
To watch the swirls glide to the sea;*

*To see the starlight glimmer grim,  
Across the currents vague and dim,  
And wish that I could go with them.*

But his London sojourn brought some literary - if not financial - success. Richard Dowling, in his Introduction to a collection of O'Donnell's poetry, **Poems** (1891) wrote:

*The year 1861 was one of the most brilliant in his life. Then his first poem, "Guesses", was accepted by Charles Dickens, and published in All the Year Round. The famous novelist wrote the young poet a most cordial and encouraging letter, and either in that letter or during an interview, recommended O'Donnell to adopt literature as a profession. In the course of a meeting, the author of A Christmas Carol gave the young poet excellent advice, and spoke in warm and appreciative terms of the ability of Irishmen in journalism and literature. He said O'Donnell's countrymen were clever, picturesque, intelligent, full of resources, but lacked staying power. I am not sure "staying power" was the phrase Dickens used, but it expresses the impression. Dickens had not been more than a couple of years dead when O'Donnell gave me the history of that meeting. I listened like one in a dream. It did not seem possible I could be sitting in the same room with a man who had held private conversation, carried on in everyday English words, with the man who told of the murder of Martin Chuzzlewit, and created Quilp.*

Guesses was only the first of a large number of poems which Dickens accepted from O'Donnell in 1861 and 1862. Michael MacDonagh describes Dickens as O'Donnell's "true friend", who "exercised his influence, but without avail, to get the poet a more reliable and regular source of income than the contribution of fugitive pieces to the magazines".

The young poet grew impatient. In a letter to Fr.

When Pope John opened some windows of the stagnant Catholic Church, the near panic reaction frightened many followers who feared that a "sell-out" was in progress.

But the inevitable changes brought new attitudes. Even the focal point of the Catholic faith the Mass was not immune from the influence of the Second Vatican Council and the international movement towards ecumenism.

Many of the sacred held rituals of Catholicism were banished into a now redundant Limbo, never again to be used for emotional purposes. Faith took on a new and contradictory dimension.

Viewed in a political context, the Church was ridding itself of useless and unnecessary rituals in order to meet the new demands of a changing flock.

Ostensibly it was a period of renewal and the seeking of closer friendship with other denominations, but inwardly the Catholic Church was going through a time of crisis.

A major "re-think" among leading theologians was in progress and the consequences were inevitable. Defections resulted and for the first time in centuries the very purpose of the Church was

seriously questioned.

A leading former Jesuit, Malachi Martin, in his recently published book, **"Three Popes And a Cardinal"** forecasts that well before the year 2000 the structure of the Catholic Church will have ceased to exist. And, to make matters worse, Dr. Martin spilled the beans for all to see and hear on the **Late, Late Show** (26th May). The projection has not been dismissed as wild conjecture because Dr. Martin was a professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and knew the last three Popes. He is also a former teacher of the Crescent College, Limerick.

His thesis, however, is not designed to lend comfort to the members of Limerick's Ignatian Community who recently published a sharp and cynical view of the "new" Catholic teaching.

The leaflet was a May Newsletter which contained a 70-line foolscap page "poem" commenting on the "new" style religion.

Written by an obviously disturbed Catholic, the poem cried out for a return to the days of "Holy

## RELIGION IN

nuns and saintly priests" as against the modern image of a "socially aware" Church.

There is a reference to one nun leaping across the wall with a "maneen" from the National Bank. There is not a mention of marriage in the relationship - yet another comment on the changing attitudes.

The poem sets the scene in a church when the returned Irish emigrant starts his search for the old style religion. He fails to meet Sister Bernadette, but on opening a door:

*"I gazed up through the mist of years and saw  
with vast surprise A mini-skirted whipster with a veil  
and made-up eyes".*

However, the trendy, swinging Sister wasted no time on ceremony and demanded the purpose of his visit, to which the old man replied that he'd like to see a nun.

*"I'm afraid my man I shall have to do. I'm the  
only nun here. The rest of the Sisters are old and  
sick, or gone to a Seminar or off to town on social  
work, or out for a drive in the car".*

Matthew Russell, S.J. editor of *The Irish Monthly*, written in late 1861, from an address at 2, Preston Street, O'Donnell complained: "... these Londoners are disgustingly slow in these matters. There are poems of mine paid for and in type at All the Year Round for months to come ... 'learn to labour and wait' is the motto of the London market. I know or ought to know it".

During this period, O'Donnell began to take an interest in the Dublin press. In 1861, he contributed a good deal of verse and prose to the *Dublin Illustrated Journal*. When a vacancy occurred in the staff of the *Nation* in 1862, O'Donnell came from London to fill it. T.D. Sullivan, then over 84 years of age, in an article in *The Catholic Bulletin* of June 1911, recalled his memories of working with O'Donnell during the poet's days - and nights - at the *Nation*:

*One of the most interesting of the group of young literary men who clustered about the Nation office in the period of A.M. Sullivan's proprietorship was John Francis O'Donnell. He was a born pressman, genial, ready-witted, a fluent producer of admirable prose and verse, with a considerable fund of humour and a profound instinct of patriotism ... In 1862 A.M. Sullivan took him on the staff of the Nation, not as a political writer, but as a literary contributor, in which capacity he gave to the paper reviews, poems, humorous squibs, a tale of Irish life founded on the Sadler and Keogh episode, and a variety of other matters. His most wonderful characteristic was the rapidity of his work. We used to say in the Nation office that if he were called out of bed at any hour of the night to complete the filling of a column of either prose or poetry, O'Donnell would cheerfully and quickly meet the requirement. He was toujours pret (always ready - J.K.). Fountain pens had not been invented in his time, but O'Donnell was a living fountain pen, always charged and ready for use. Of course, every separate item of the work so produced could not be equally meritorious, but it was all of good quality and much of it very strong, brilliant and beautiful.*

The remarkable rapidity of O'Donnell's work also impressed another writer. Richard Dowling gives a graphic account of the poet's unique writing, talent:

*But the experience of O'Donnell's method of work which amazed me most of all I had in the Nation office. I went out into the composing room and found him seated on the only chair, smoking and writing, with his paper on the "stone", a large table of slate or metal where the pages of newspapers and books are imposed or arranged in*

*the proper order for printing. A very large and extremely noisy machine was in full work below, in sight of the composing room, there being a wide, long opening in the floor to let light down to the nethermost regions. "What on earth are you doing here?" I shouted above the din. "I - I - I -", he answered, he had a slight impediment in his speech, "I am doing my poem for the week". "What! in this awful racket?" I shouted incredulously. "Yes", he said; "I like the noise. It soothes me", and he went on with his poem.*

O'Donnell's fervent nationalism found a ready outlet in the columns of the *Nation*. Describing the poet's political beliefs T.D. Sullivan wrote:

*... though he took no part in the agitations and joined none of the national organisations of his time he was a Nationalist in every fibre of his being. If he brought to the service of the cause neither pike nor gun, he gave it the lightning of his genius ... He could be vehement, even fierce in his denunciation of the oppressors of his race, but there was a vein of tenderness in his nature for those who suffered and sorrowed in his own land or felt the woes of exile at a distance from her shores.*

O'Donnell himself clearly saw his role in the cause of Irish Catholic nationalism and expressed it intensely in his poem, *The Question*:

*Poor toilers we, with sword and brain,  
We help her with our utmost power;  
We write her name on rath and plain -  
Her banner plant o'er fosse and tower.  
We watch the seedling in the rain,  
And wait till heaven shall give it flower.*

*Persistent in her hidden strength,  
And wakeful in her vigil's dream,  
Confiding, surely that at length,  
The issue of the years would seem,  
Not the poised torch and amaranth  
But Freedom and the Sun a - beam*

*It has not come; a hundred cells  
Hold fast our bravest and our best;  
They sing in pain the air that dwells  
In every movement of unrest;  
The anthem of the heart that tells  
How man is cursed and God is blessed.*

But his impassioned nationalism led him into poetic and political excesses. In the poem, *John Mitchel*, O'Donnell ignores the inconsistency of Mitchel's open advocacy of slavery in America and his demand for "liberty" in Ireland. Carried away by his unbounded admiration for Mitchel, and

unhampered by unpleasant historical facts, the poet extravagantly lavishes idolatrous praise on his "crowned chief":

*It shall not - when the curse and blame  
Were on your head, when fools and knaves  
Spoke of John Mitchel's treachery  
And bit the lip and winked the eye;  
My cheek flung out the banner shame  
My tongue replied to half the slaves.*

*I toiling in these barren days  
Of fatal meanness pit against truth,  
Think of the gallant master hand,  
That all but half redeemed the land.  
I see through opposing haze  
Chief and ideal of my youth.*

*Despair not; would 'twere mine to give  
The Chrism of patience, wove of faith,  
John Mitchel, you indeed would be  
Crowned chief of my idolatry;  
No truer man deserves to live,  
None other looked less blanched at Death.*

In January 1862, *The Hibernian Magazine* was reduced in size and price and began a new course as *Duffy's Hibernian Sixpenny Magazine*. John Francis O'Donnell was appointed editor of the changed journal later in the same year. Here he increasingly used his best known nom de plume, Caviare, and he also wrote under the name Emily French. Later in his career he used another nom de plume, Monckton West, and further added the titles, P. Monks and X.M.P., to his list of pen-names. Writing about O'Donnell's shift to *Duffy's Hibernian Sixpenny Magazine*, Owen Roe, in *The Shamrock* of 24th February 1877, stated:

*Duffy's Hibernian Magazine*, bowing its head to the almost universal decree on Irish literary efforts, has long since died away. But, we believe, from the day on which O'Donnell accepted the position of editor until it died the common death, he, O'Donnell, was its sole literary conductor. The magazine, being very ably edited, was supported for some time - not particularly by the great mass of the Irish people, but chiefly by the middle classes ...

When the magazine folded after about two years, O'Donnell once again moved on. In late 1863, he was back in London, and, in the words of Michael MacDonagh, "he seems to have swung like a pendulum between the two metropolises for the ensuing ten years".

(To be continued.)

## POETIC MOTION

The man recovers his breath and asks to see an old nun who duly staggers along the corridor to gasp:

*"Sure the chapel is lonely as the grave, except at the hour of Mass when they bawl and bray Protestant hymns like Patsy Donegan's ass. And the din of the music splits your ears, you'd hear it in Castlegar. With Benignus banging the banjo and Imelda the guitar".*

After that musical interlude, the old nun gathers her breath and continues her diatribe against the modern young trendies in the Convent. The old Sister is a fair hand at giving a bit of scandal ... and this was way before Watergate or Lord Lambton.

*"Do not mind that Sister Rose, a brazen one at best. She tortured us all with her modern talk-renewal and all the rest. Sure a year ago come Michaelmas Day she leapt across the wall. With a little maneen in the National Bank, from north of Donegal".*

Leaping over the wall seemed a popular pastime in this particular convent as another Sister;

*"Left the convent to work for God - her conscience said it was best. Now she's married a Guard and feeding hens out beyond in Parteen West".*

For all her ancient and obsolete beliefs, the old Sister shows a clear understanding of where the gradual progression is leading:

*"If things go on the way they are - sure you'll see the novices yet playing poker with the doctor's wives, and boozing with the vet".*

The old man walks sadly away and ponders a while over the grave of dear Father Pat. Here the disillusioned emigrant thinks: "Is he wasting his time in Heaven or what with religion becoming a joke?"

Maybe someone, somewhere is laughing ... laughing at the dead generations who built a powerful and wealthy institution in the name of "love". Laughing at those who wore out endless

rosary beads and prayer-books in the name of religion. Laughing at the whole process of ritual religion and emotive ceremony.

And so as the disillusioned old man walks off into the sunset, he can take solace in the fact that he is not alone. He is only one of many ... confused, misled, and frustrated by the trapped leadership of a Church which now could be said to resemble a sinking ship ... which many of the officers have already abandoned.

The said, old man is, therefore, an important symbolic figure. He represents that throwback to a bygone age - "the man of simple faith".

And so the confusion and disillusionment of the Catholic Church has finally washed into the cosy corner of Limerick's Ignation Community.

The days when the Jesuit past-pupils had their own special brand of religion, administered by a sophisticated priesthood, are coming to an end. The other kind of religion - "the simple faith" for the common herd - is breaking up. The workers are now being treated to all kinds of "special" brands of faith - and the members of the Ignation Community don't like this "do-it-yourself" religion.

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# THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

For most Irish workers the Presidential Election was a non-issue. The office is effectively confined as a plum job for the professional politicians, and has no bearing on the lives of the ordinary people. The two candidates who contested the election, O'Higgins and Childers, are representatives of the two main political stands of Irish capitalism, which divided on the Civil War issue. The office is nothing more than a public relations agency for Irish capitalism.

The election literature of the two candidates tried to waffle its way around this central fact by flowery language and vague, unrealistic aspirations. O'Higgins, in his election address stated:

*I believe that the President should be sensitive to the hopes and ideals of all the Irish people - especially those which can bind us together. Equally, I believe that the prestige of the office of President should be used to discourage those tendencies which in the past have divided us. It is because I hold these views so strongly that I accepted nomination for election to this high Office - an Office which represents Ireland as a nation and a people to the people of the whole world.*

The sweeping attempt to include by stealth the Northern Protestant community in "Ireland as a nation" is typical of the propaganda which has perpetuated the one-nation myth for the last 100 years. To dismiss "those tendencies which in the past have divided us" in this glib manner will hardly have fooled many Northern Protestants - but then this bluff was for Southern consumption only. Capitalism has been the main divisive influence in Southern Irish society, but O'Higgins could hardly be expected to say this.

Childers, in his election address, also naturally enough, referred to the "nation".

*I believe that the office of President is one in which the example of the holder can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the nation.*

In the week before the Presidential Election, a fellow-deputy of the same political party as Childers, Liam Aherne, the Fianna Fail T.D. for Cork North East, had a different idea of how to make "a meaningful contribution to the development of the nation". "More guns we want. Bags of guns", he shouted across the floor of the Dail.

This open declaration was a more accurate description of the aims of Southern Nationalism than the hypocritical Presidential Election charade.

## THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING ...

"But then Mickey (Mullen) has been an Establishment figure for a long time and must be delighted to see that other well-known establishment figure ... Gus Martin of U.C.D. a member of the Club (Senate) also".

("Backbencher", Irish Times, 12/5/73).

The low poll of the election reflected the widespread apathy, especially evident among the young people. The victory of Childers was also a sign of the disenchantment felt by many people with the policies and the recent Budget of the

National Coalition. The refusal of the Government to tax farmers, and the glib, hypocritical manner in which the Labour Party submerged itself in the Government and in the Presidential Election, caused many workers and Labour supporters to abstain from voting. The rejection of Labour's and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union's support for the former Blueshirt O'Higgins, was clearly demonstrated in Dublin and the other main cities.

In Limerick East, the defeat of the Coalition candidate by almost a thousand votes marks a further erosion of the credibility of the Labour Party and its clique of local public representatives. The decline of the capitalist Labour Party in Limerick and throughout the country offers a real opportunity for the emergence of a genuine working class party. This has been the only positive aspect of the Presidential Election from a socialist standpoint.

## THE MONTH'S MIND

### RUSSELL IN SPRING (BED)

The hottest thing to come out of Limerick since LOLA MONTEZ whored her way across the Continent. That was the verdict of the two scholarly members of the City Council who were observed drinking after hours in HANRATTY'S HOTEL.

A sharp denial that any convent-educated Irish girl could ever be a call-girl came from the Provisional I.R.A. in a statement issued from Dublin.

"This is vicious British propaganda aimed at demoralising the glorious freedom fighters of the North. These lies must be seen for what they are and must be rejected by all peace-loving Irish people", said the statement.

"This episode clearly shows the debased minds of the British and the yellow press publicity has caused strain and suffering on Miss Russell's relatives. We do not need to point out that her aunt is a Reverend Mother and her uncle is a member of the Alexian Order who writes beautiful poetry. So therefore the claim that this pure and kind Irish girl could be a whore who sold her lovely, young body for money is totally absurd", concluded the Provisionals statement.

However, behind the scenes the Provisionals are believed to have formed a special squad of men whose job it will be to scan each room whenever Sean MacStiofain enters. "We're taking no chances with two-way mirrors", a usually reliable source close to the Provisionals said.

Throughout Ireland special prayers were said in Convents for the conversion of the "dirty" men who led the young and innocent Irish girl astray.

However, a spokesman for the Hierarchy stated that there was never any such thing as an Irish whore. "We solved all that in 1922 with that fellow O'Casey. The people of Ireland loyally accepted what they believed to be true", said the short statement.

In Limerick two dozen reporters from English and Continental newspapers crowded around the Alexandra Terrace Nursing Home in O'Connell Avenue. In the genteel drawing rooms of the exclusive homes in Corbally and the Ennis Road the affair was breathlessly discussed over afternoon tea as the bored and holy ladies twittered. "Those blasted reporters are giving Limerick a bad name", protested an outraged resident.

Not far away on the Dock Road a home-grown Limerick car-call girl was also protesting: "I don't know what all the fuss is above, love ... it's been going on down here for years ... Lords, clergymen, big business fellows ... even the lousy, so-and-so Guards in their Squad Car ... yes, I've had the bloody lot" she yelled, as she dashed off into a waiting black Mercedes.

### THEY ALSO SERVE

(To Miss Nora Russell And The Glory Of the Cause).

*I say: let history answer this,  
For us we freely risk the chance,  
And, meanwhile, be it joy or bliss,  
Our constant motto is: Advance.  
To ladies, whispered voice and kiss;  
For freemen, rifle, sword, and lance.*

(The Question - J.F. O'Donnell).

### SIMPLE SIMON AND THE EFFIN SCANDAL.

It was a timely coincidence. On the week that news of the Nora Russell/Lord Lambton/Lord Jellico ... affair broke, Miss Russell's uncle, Brother Stephen Russell (Alexian Brothers), a volunteer social worker at the Simon Community, Limerick, published a booklet of religious poems. He describes the "down-and-outs" in his verses, and one poem, *The Drop Out* is topical:

*But I'll be moving along tomorrow  
The next meal and a bed to find.  
I feel at the end of my tether,  
To heaven above I shout -  
Of God! why did you allow them destroy me?  
Is the plaint of your poor drop-out.*

The title of the booklet is also a timely coincidence: *There, But For The Grace Of God ...*

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